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For State's LEGO Robotics Winners, Champions Award and a Head Start on College Tuition

More than 300 local elementary and middle school students tested their robotics and research skills in Rhode Island championship held at RWU



Team Mindstorms Mayhem from All Saints STEAM Academy in Middletown won the Champions Award at the FIRST LEGO League Tournament. From left to right : Xavier Lora, Pierson Garcia, RJ White, Tyra Kutsaftis, Hannah Houle, Charlie Silveria.

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BRISTOL, R.I. -- It was a frigid, wintry day outside, but the Campus Recreation Center at Roger Williams University was red hot with fierce competition on Saturday as more than 40 teams of kids from across Rhode Island ferociously competed in the annual FIRST LEGO League Robotics State Championship, sponsored by National Grid.

FIRST LEGO League is a hands-on science, technology, engineering and math enrichment program that combines the excitement of robotics with a research project that encourages scientific literacy. The tournament is managed by Rhode Island School of the Future.

The teams of students ages nine to 14 spent the morning presenting their robot creations and research projects to judges and the afternoon in a high-energy, sports-like tournament, where their robots navigated a series of obstacles on a game field made of LEGOs. This year's theme, World Class Challenge, tasked students to develop an innovative solution to help people learn in different ways in the classroom.

Each team was judged on three elements -- robot building, core values and research -- and awards were given in categories such as robot design, robot strategy, research quality and teamwork. The team earning the highest cumulative score across all judging categories wins the Champions Award and may be eligible to participate in the FIRST LEGO League World Festival held in St. Louis from April 22 to 25, 2015.

Each member of the Champions Award team is also awarded a Roger Williams University scholarship -- a four-year scholarship of \$5,000 per year for a \$20,000 award in total.

The Champions Award and RWU scholarship were awarded to Team Mindstorms Mayhem from All Saints STEAM Academy in Middletown. The Bearded Builders from the Lawn School in Jamestown were awarded second place, and the Judges' Award went to the RoboWolves, also from the Lawn School in Jamestown.

RWU has hosted the state championship event for nine years. The University recognizes the critical role the program plays in engaging young students in science, technology, engineering and math. "The future of Rhode Island is in this room," RWU President Donald J. Farish said during the open ceremonies.

Congressman Jim Langevin also offered inspiring words to the group of students participating in the tournament: "You can change the world. Always set your goals high, and do not accept any excuse in the way to achieving your goals."

Rockin' Robots Coach Susan Unger from St. Peter School in Warwick said that while she has led teams year after year in the FIRST LEGO League tournaments, the program continues to challenge students in learning new skills each year, which proves an invaluable learning opportunity for her teams.

"FIRST LEGO League is a great learning experience, and it's gratifying to be there for the kids when they are engaged in this challenge. Even if they do not pursue a path in robotics as a career, these skills that they learn will serve them well throughout their life."

The full list of award winners is available at: <http://www.risf.net/first-lego-league/>.